



*When Every Word Counts...*

MERCED WILD AND SCENIC RIVER  
Revised Comprehensive Management Plan and  
Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

PUBLIC HEARING

AUGUST 17, 2004

EL PORTAL, CALIFORNIA

REPORTED BY: MICHELLE L. MATHESON, CSR NO. 12358

**ORIGINAL**

STATEMENT OF [REDACTED]:

My primary comment is that the common period is not long enough and it has not been well publicized, especially locally here in this area. I'm a resident and a lot of people don't know about it. This is a very important plan. And if there's going to be any changes to it, there needs to be more public involvement. And that the main Merced River plan, the original one, all of it needs to be revisited.

STATEMENT OF [REDACTED]:

I was a long-time resident of Yosemite National Park. I learned to walk on Glacier Point where the Glacier Point Hotel chef baked my first birthday cake. My father was Don Pimental, a campground ranger, where we lived in Camp 11. Later we lived in Camp 6. And my father's final assignment was as a back country ranger.

I was going to UCSB during the '80s when a large part of the master plan was fashioned. And at that time I stated the major problem with the mindset of the people designing the plan was that they seem to forget that national parks are for everyone, not just

the young and the able bodied. And that the last time I checked, national parks were also for all of God's creatures, that includes Homo sapiens.

It is my firm belief that the national park mindset needs to modify to compensate for visitors rather than try to eliminate them.

MS. TUTTLE: We may not have a lot of people signed up to testify. We are using the same format where there's a three minute time limit, just so that everybody at each meeting gets treated the same, just to make it fair. So we will have the three minute time frame. When I call your name, if you would use that microphone that's closest to the court reporter. If you've signed up and filled out a card with your name printed so that we get your name correct in the transcript, if you could hand it to her. She'll use that to make sure we get your name spelled correctly. And, of course, the park is here to listen and they will also get a copy of the public testimony. We do have the little timer up here. So when you start, we will start it. You'll have a green light. When you get down to one minute left, you'll get the yellow light. And then when the three minutes is expired, the red light will come on. Again, three minutes --

you know, it's really an opportunity for you to kind of hit the major points that you want to make in your comments. Three minutes can go pretty quickly. So try and hit the major points that you want to make and remember you can turn in a detailed and lengthy public comment that you would like in the written format. So we will go ahead and get started. So far I know we only have one person signed up for public testimony, but I'm sure we'll have a couple others as we get going here. So, Phyllis Weber.

STATEMENT OF [REDACTED]:

If 656 beds are to be moved to El Portal and occupied by concession service employees who work in the valley, there should be a transportation plan to address the needs of these employees. There should not be 656 additional cars commuting between El Portal and Yosemite Valley. If NPS is considering a restriction on the number of visitor vehicles, it should first restrict the number of employee vehicles. A private business would never give its prime parking to employees while restricting customer parking.

Any housing plans need to go hand-in-hand with transportation plans that first deal with

public transportation for employees and then deal with vehicle congestion from visitors.

And another idea I have is to number all of the parking spaces in the valley and then notify the public and the employees that they will have only one numbered spot to park in the valley. This could reduce the amount of cruising around to find parking. You could move the entrance station to El Portal and hand out parking spaces from there, while providing shuttle buses for those who do not get a parking spot because they've all been given out. You could allow people to purchase an entrance ticket and a parking ticket combination ahead of time online for the numbered space. Thank you.

MS. TUTTLE: Did you give your public testimony to the court reporter earlier?

Each person is only allowed three minutes, though. During the open house we have a court reporter available for anybody who's not comfortable standing up in front of a group and giving your three minutes of testimony, and that should have been explained to you at the door when you came in. So please, do get your comments in.

What we'll do in the meantime is maybe adjourn

the public testimony portion and go back to the open house format and when you're ready to testify, we'll start things back up again. We will be here until 9:00. So we'll either be in the open house format or the public testimony format.

██████████ If the court reporter could indicate the approximate number of minutes, because my other comments on a different topic would not take three minutes and I don't believe I spoke those three minutes.

MIKE REYNOLDS: Why don't we take a break so we can figure this out.

██████████: Okay. Thank you.

MS. TUTTLE: All right. We're going to restart the formal public testimony portion of the meeting. So again, if people want to sit down or if you want to stay in the back, if you could kind of lower your voices a little bit so that we can hear everything clearly. If you want to use that mike, it's closer to the court reporter.

And if you could state and spell your name so we

can get the name correct in the testimony transcript.

The timer is right here.

██████████ Although, it's hard to read and watch. So somebody give me a, you know, when it's the yellow.

MS. TUTTLE: Yeah, on the yellow I'll give you a signal one minute left.

STATEMENT BY ██████████:

Okay. My name is ██████████. I'm with Friends of Yosemite Valley. First of all, no prior notice was given for the scoping period. So we feel very strongly it's important to give the public an opportunity to have an extended comment period. Many people did not know about the scoping or if they did, it was too late to participate, and certainly too late for them to get all their ideas together to put in written testimony. The scope of the scoping is very inappropriately being narrowed by the National Park Service. They're narrowing it to the user capacity and the El Portal boundary. In fact, those are all interrelated especially with the zoning. Zoning is a numbers -- a user type of user impact

method that the park service has chosen to use. That absolutely needs to be revisited.

Probably many people do not realize what the Appeals Court actually ruled. The Appeals Court ruled, quote, "While we remanded to, quote, the District Court to enter an appropriate order requiring the National Park Service to remedy these deficiencies, user capacity in El Portal area boundaries in the CMP in a timely manner, at 8/03, we did not, quote, otherwise uphold the CMP," end quote. I think it's really important to realize this and to, you know, do the revision in such a way that really is true to the Wild Scenic Rivers Act, goal and mandate of protection and enhancement of the ORVs, the outstandingly remarkable values of the river. The park service's determination and user capacity and boundaries in El Portal cannot be made in isolation and then simply inserted to the old Merced river plan. Rather, decisions about boundaries must be integrated.

I'm hoping that people here in El Portal will do -- a really fresh look at El Portal and the ORVs that are present here so that can be inputted in your comments into the revision.

And I do want to mention that the NPS employees



and public's responsibility in this, in order for us to fulfill this, I would request that data that is produced by the NPS is put up on the website so the public can see it. Because we'd like to have the opportunity to monitor the ORVs and watch them and understand them and be able to make sure that they're not being degraded, which is absolutely not allowed in the river plan. And riffraff is not allowed in the river for your new plans.

MS. TUTTLE: Okay. Thank you very much. Is there anyone else who wanted to give your three minutes of formal testimony? If not, we'll go back to an open house format. And again, we'll be here until 9:00. And we do encourage everybody to please submit comments on alternatives on resources that need to be examined in the EIF. The park is really looking for some input. So we appreciate you coming, and we'll go back to an open house format. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF [REDACTED]:

My comment is that I think that the language and the layout that was used is really difficult for the average person to understand. I think that for all

of the effort that went into the signage and the explanations, that I doubt many people really understand what they're here to learn about. I don't think it's very well explained and I think that the language that was used is so -- you have to be immersed in park service lingo to really understand. You need to study this for a long time in order to make a comment. And so I just wish that they could use examples -- concrete examples of what this means for the people living in El Portal and the park and for visitors.

MS. TUTTLE: All right. If I could get everybody's attention one more time. If I could get everybody's attention one more time. We appreciate your patience. We're trying a new format that gives opportunity to people who are uncomfortable speaking in public. And so there's been a little bit of confusion in terms of whether that was in supplement to your formal public testimony during this period or not. So since there was some confusion, we're going to go ahead and allow for another three minutes of public testimony. All right. [REDACTED] And if you could use that mike near the reporter.

STATEMENT OF [REDACTED]:

My full name is [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], and I've spent the better part of a half century involved in Yosemite National Park. So I bring a rather unique perspective to it. I'm also a fourth-generation visitor to Yosemite National Park. My grandparents first brought my father here when he was six months old and there were two tire tracks running through the valley. Speaking of impact, and lots of apple trees and cows I understand. In those 50 years, I've discovered inevitably under control leads to over control. And I don't think there is a department in the government that we could not find many examples of that. And it really breaks my heart that a place that I would give my life for is falling victim to it.

In some of the documents they were suggesting one of the possibilities for the river is that we have walking paths and fishing paths. I think this is over control. How about something real simple and a lot cheaper. On even months you can fish from one side of the river, and on odd months you can fish from the other side of the river, provided that there is safe access to those, and maybe we'll build a few

foot bridges. An example of under control and over control.

And with all respect to one lady's suggestion of numbered sites, that may be also over control. But there is a real problem in visitorship. It goes up, and one of the suggestions was let's make overnight visitorship go down. No, I lived in Camp 11 -- I think that's a.k.a. Upper Pines -- when people used to tie their tents to other people's cars before there were designated campsites. Designated campsites diminished our overnight visitorship 50 percent, and a third of those designated sites have also been removed. So the problem is not our overnight visitors. Our problem is the day-use visitor. If everything else requires a reservation, then day use needs to be done by reservations as well.

Also, in regards to restoring our scenic water ways to their original condition. Well, under control leading to over control and maybe lack of information. Riparian banks? I don't think so. Yosemite Valley was a marsh until Galen Clark blew up the terminal moraine. If you want to reestablish a terminal moraine and have a lot more mosquitoes, then we could really put it back the way it used to be.

MS. TUTTLE: All right. Thank you very much.  
Is there anybody else who wanted to give three  
minutes of public testimony? If not, we will  
readjourn to our open house format. And again, thank  
you very much.

(Whereupon, the public hearing concluded at  
9:00 p.m.)

# REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, MICHELLE L. MATHESON, a Certified Shorthand Reporter of the State of California, do hereby certify that said proceedings was taken at the time and place therein named; that the testimony of the said parties was reported by me, a disinterested person, and thereafter transcribed into the foregoing pages.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my signature at my office in Fresno, California, this 30TH day of August, 2004.



MICHELLE L. MATHESON, CSR 12358